

My name is Peter Palmer and I been employed as an Investigator with the Public Defenders office for almost 15 years. I am currently assigned to the Capital Defense and Trial Services Unit.

I am here on behalf of all our investigators to ask this committee to seriously consider the proposed bill # 6639. This bill asks that you amend and permit any investigator employed by the office of Public Defender to receive the benefit of hazardous duty retirement. I would also add that this proposal should also include any Support Enforcement officer employed by the State of Connecticut.

I am here today because this is an area that has not been properly addressed and should be at this time.

I think it is important for this committee to understand that we as investigators are out on the streets every day unarmed trying to adequately represent indigent, troubled and often very sick individuals.

We are constantly put into hazardous and stressful situations that are out of our control, but if we don't do what we do, then our job is not being done and our clients are not being equally and just fully represented.

I guess you can ask the question that why should investigators with the public defenders office have hazardous duty they are not law enforcement. But if you really think about it we are. Law Enforcement is about equal justice and that is what our job entails. Equal Justice.

I say equal justice because we are asking you to put us up on an equal level with other state agencies that have the benefit of hazardous duty retirement.

I was told that we needed to let you people know about every situation when we are attacked or abused. I don't think this is true. Does this go on? Yes
But there are other sides to just being physically attacked. How about working 3 death penalty cases in a row with no breaks.
Being able to juggle these cases and having 6 attorneys on your back because they need subpoenas served, people that need to be interviewed and located, traveling out of state to places we don't know. Interviewing rape victims, and having the ability to interview people who don't really even want to talk to you.

I would ask you to sit in court with me one day and look at other state employees who think you're an idiot because you are representing the "worst of the worst. That stress, but we deal with it every day. And to top it off dealing with your wife and kids you also care for at the same time.

This is real life and it is stressful.

We do our jobs because this is the profession that we chose and in closing I would just add that we all are working for the same thing. Justice.

I was taught as a young kid that fair is fair and know we are asking you as a committee and as legislatures to at least take the time to consider putting us on a fair an equal playing field with our fellow State employees.

Thank you.